

Message Text

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ACTION CU-05

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0871

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL

SUBJECT: OPERATION "SHOESTRING": THE BINATIONAL CENTER AT SANTIAGO
DE LOS CABALLEROS

1. LAST NIGHT THE AMBASSADOR HOSTED A DINNER FOR FOURTEEN, CAREFULLY-SELECTED, LEADING LIGHTS OF THE DOMREP'S SECOND CITY, SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS. THE PURPOSE OF THE EVENING WAS TO STIMULATE GREATER LOCAL SUPPORT FOR THE US-DOMINICAN BINATIONAL CENTER AT SANTIAGO WHICH HAS BEEN LIMPING ALONG FOR YEARS THANKS MAINLY TO THE CRUTCH OF A USIA SUBSIDY.

2. THE AMBASSADOR DESCRIBED THE POOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT THE CENTER WAS RECEIVING WHICH HE FOUND INCONGRUENT WITH THE PROFESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP FOR THE US WHICH HE HEARD EVERYWHERE IN SANTIAGO. HE ALSO DELINEATED THE VICIOUS CIRCLE IN WHICH THE CENTER FOUND ITSELF: THE CENTER COULD IMPROVE ITS FINANCIAL SITUATION MATERIALLY IF IT HAD ROOM FOR MORE ENGLISH STUDENTS; IT COULD NOT OBTAIN MORE ROOM BECAUSE OF ITS FINANCIAL SITUATION. THE AMBASSADOR THEN ADDRESSED THE PROBABLE INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF THE NORTH COAST AS THE GODR'S TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLANS MATERIALIZED DURING THE NEXT TWO YEARS. THE DEMAND FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKERS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY INCREASE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SANTIAGO COULD BE ENHANCED.

3. THE LIVELY DISCUSSION AMONG THE GUESTS THAT RESULTED FROM THE AMBASSADOR'S PRESENTATION WAS MARKED BY ASSERTIONS OF UN-
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AWARENESS OF THE CENTER'S PLIGHT, BY STUNG PRIDE, BY NEUROTIC

RIVALRY WITH SANTO DOMINGO AND BY THE EVER-PRESENT HOPE THAT THE US MIGHT SOME DAY RE-ESTABLISH ITS CONSULTE AND RESOTRE SANTIAGO TO ITS FORMER FLORY (PLEASE SEE NEXT FOLLOWING CABLE). WITH THIS COMBINATION OF FACTORS AT WORK, IT WAS RELATIVELY EASY TO GUIDE THE ASSEMBLAGE TOWARD A NUMBER OF SPONTANEOUS PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE INCOME OF THE PRESENT CENTER AND TO BUILD A NEW AND LARGER ONE.

4. WITH RESPECT TO CURRENT INCOME FROM MEMBERSHIP, THE CENTER IS "SUPPORTED" BY TWENTY-TWO MEMBERS WHO PAY TWELVE PESOS (EQUALS DOLLARS) A YEAR, A TOTALLY RIDICULOUS SITUATION. NOW A NEW CLASS OF MEMBERSHIP, THAT OF "PATRON", WILL BE ESTABLISHED FOR BUINESSES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS AT AN ANNUAL FEE OF ONE HUNDRED PESOS. THE GUESTS INDICATED THEY COULD OBTAIN FIFTY SUCH MEMBERSHIPS (THE AMBASSADOR HAD PREVIOUSLY CONSULTED THE IDEA DURING HIS LAST PERIODIC MEETING IN SANTO DOMINGO WITH THE DOMINICAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND HAD RECEIVED POSITIVE RESPONSE). SUCH INCOME FROM MEMBERSHIP WOULD OBIATE THE BNC MONTHLY PRACTICE OF SCRMABLING TO PAY ITS RENT AND UTILITIES BILLS.

5. WITH RESPECT TO THE NECESSITY FOR LARGER QUARTERS, THE MAYOR OF SANTIAGO OFFERED TO DONATE A WELL-LOCATED 3,000 SQUARE METER LOT OF LAND (VALUED AT 36,000 PESOS) AND TO PROVIDE FROM THE CITY'S RESOURCES EXCAVATING AND CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT AS WELL AS TRANSPORT AT NO COST TO ASSIST IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW BUILDING. THE WEALTHY OUTGOING PRESIDENT OF THE DOMINICAN INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION, ANTONIO NAJRI, AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE DOMINICAN COMMERCIAL ASSOCIATION, GEORGE ARZENO BRUGAL (IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE BRUGAL RUM FAMILY) TOGETHER PLEDGED A DONATION OF FIFTY THOUSAND PESOS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW EDIFICE. ALEJANDRO GRULLON, PRESIDENT OF THE BANCO POPULAR, OFFERED A LOAN OF UP TO FIFTY THOUSAND PESOS FOR CONSTRUCTION. MANY OTHERS IN THE ROOM WHO COULD INDIVIDUALLY MATCH ANYONE ELSE'S DONATION WERE RETICENT DURING THE OPEN DISCUSSION BUT PRIVATELY ASSURED US OF THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A REPRESENTATIONALLY ADEQUATE AND FUNCTIONAL BNC.

6. THE DOUGHTY LITTLE RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA MADRE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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Y MAESTRA AT SANTIAGO, MONSEÑOR AGRIPINO NUNEZ, TOOK THE GROUP IN HAND AND NAMED HIMSELF GENERAL HONCHO AND CHAIRMAN OF FUND-RAISING (AS A CHURCHMAN AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT HE SHOULD BE WELL-PRACTICED). HE CALLED A MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLAGE FOR 11 A.M. JULY 5 IN SANTIAGO ("DRINKS NO LUNCH" HE ANNOUNCED), TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES AND SUBSEQUENTLY PRESENT THE AMBASSADOR WITH A FIRM PROPOSAL TO CONSTRUCT A BINATIONAL CENTER AT NO COST TO THE USG.

7. COMMENT: EVEN ALLOWING FOR THE EFFECTS OF A RATHER
EXCELLENT DINNER WINE, THE GOOD GURGHES OF SANTIAGO SEEMED
SINCERELY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT DOING SOMETHING SUBSTANTIAL FOR
THE BNC. WE WOULD OF COURSE BE VERY PLEASED TO END UP WITH A
MORE VIABLE CENTER BECAUSE IN OUR EXPERIENCE BNC'S PROVIDE
THE USG ONE OF THE LEAST EXPENSIVE AND YET QUITE EFFECTIVE
WAYS OF PROMOTING A VARIETY OF OUR INTERESTS.
HURWITCH

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